

November 8, 2006

Press Release | Contact: Danielle Langone (202) 225-6416

WASHINGTON, DC—For more than three years, U.S. Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) has been calling for Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to resign or be fired because of his multiple failures related to the Iraq war. Earlier this week, DeFazio was joined by the leadership of The Army Times, The Navy Times, The Marine Corps Times, and The Air Force Times who published a joint editorial calling on President Bush to fire Secretary Rumsfeld. These papers are independent publications read widely throughout the military. This editorial followed in the wake of several retired generals calling for Rumsfeld's ousting over the last year. Today, Secretary Rumsfeld finally heeded these calls and submitted his resignation.

"The removal of Secretary Rumsfeld is long overdue," DeFazio said. "The failures in Iraq are not his alone, but he bears a large share of responsibility for the mistakes and misrepresentations prior to the war and the well known failures in Iraq over the last three years. If we had changed course earlier, it would have been easier and would have saved U.S. lives. Secretary Rumsfeld failed to provide adequate body armor for the troops, said we'd be treated as liberators, and refused to read the report on what would be necessary to succeed in post-Saddam Iraq. Finally holding an administration official accountable for his policy failures sends an important signal on the need for competent governance."

"However, Rumsfeld's departure will be meaningless if the President and Vice President keep pursuing the same policies in Iraq with a new Secretary of Defense, which is the impression the President gave today. The American people made it clear in yesterday's election that they want a new direction in Iraq. Our troops have been done all that has been asked of them in Iraq. It is now time to end the open-ended commitment the President has made, which has been used as a crutch by Iraqi politicians to avoid making the necessary political compromises to stabilize their country. The U.S. needs to negotiate a timeline to withdraw our troops beginning next year and refocus our efforts on fighting al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and elsewhere."

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